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Federal Investment in the NWT

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to speak about the Government of the Northwest Territories' efforts in securing federal investment in our Territory.

For four years we heard former Premier Joe Handley tell us the Deh Cho Bridge project was contingent on the federal government coming forward to help us pay for that bridge. We waited and waited for that investment and, obviously, none came and the government decided we would pay for it ourselves. Mr. Speaker, we will be paying for that bridge upwards of \$4 million a year every year indexed for the next 35 years.

Mr. Speaker, why didn't the federal government step in with a sizeable effort? The GNWT is now left holding that bag, and it's a very expensive bag, for 35 years. Last fall people in our Territory were very excited that the Prime Minister and many other federal Cabinet Ministers were in Inuvik, a big announcement was coming and many here were hoping that this announcement was for funding for the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Deh Cho Bridge or some other big investment in our Territory.

However, what we received was an announcement of a new icebreaker to be named after former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. I can't say, Mr. Speaker, that I blame the federal government entirely. It points to the fact that we need to get our act together politically here in the Northwest Territories to ensure we can present a common message and front to the federal government.

Some recent examples of how our neighbours in the Yukon have been very successful in getting substantial investments have led me to believe that the Yukon government seems to understand how Ottawa works. The Yukon has, in the last couple of years, received some very big investments, like the \$28 million for the Canada Games Complex in Whitehorse, \$5 million to help the agricultural industry in the Yukon -- and that comes from the Growing Forward Initiative, a \$1.3 billion fund -- and, more recently, a \$71 million investment in the Mayo Hydro Facility enhancement and stage two of the Carmacks-Stewart Transmission Line.

Mr. Speaker, where is our government at when it comes to getting the federal government to help fund such things as the advancement of agriculture, recreation facility infrastructure and hydro development, just to name a few?

Mr. Speaker, I'm not suggesting that we don't appreciate what the federal government gives us; I'm very thankful for that. The problem, as I see it, is our inability to deliver a cohesive, unified message. Mr. Speaker, we'd better try to figure this out, otherwise the opportunities will continue to pass us by. Thank you.